

VA Research Enterprise Transformation: What It Means for the ACOS-R and Field

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VHA Office of Research and Development
Sept. 12, 2022



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CUTTING TO THE CHASE

- ACOS – Rs have a critical role in leading and transforming the VA Research Enterprise and ORD aims to support their success.
- This session will highlight key VA Research Enterprise Transformation efforts and their implications for the field.
 - The VA Enterprise Transformation Initiative aims to increase opportunities and effectiveness for VA R&D Offices and researchers desiring to improve Veteran health.
 - ACOS-Rs will have a role in planning and communicating upcoming changes for scientific and operational activities.

When We Last Spoke... (on Aug. 25, 2021)

- The reasons for an enterprise approach were communicated.
- The experiences of COVID and cancer research were shared to illustrate advantages of an enterprise strategy.
- A roadmap for field operations was laid out.
- ACOS-Rs were asked to be a partner in engaging with and communicating the vision and direction.

VA Research Enterprise Vision

What is the VA Research Enterprise?



VA Research Enterprise is the entire set of **people, tools, and processes** committed to a **whole-of-VA approach** for improving **Veteran health and well-being** through **scientific endeavors**.



Unique Value Proposition: leverage our position as the only Federal research entity devoted to Veterans' interests and being embedded in the nation's largest integrated healthcare system



Real-World Outcomes: define our success in terms of tangible real-world improvements in Veterans' health and well-being



Engaged People: composed of a vibrant, diverse research community united in our mission to improve Veterans' well-being through research



Integration: cultivate relationships and partnerships to that accelerate our ability to achieve our mission



Organizational Excellence: operates with streamlined processes, effective collaboration, high-quality customer service, and appropriate resources

We are Evolving into a Research Enterprise

We are evolving from...

"If you've seen 1 VA; you've seen 1 VA."

... in order to move towards

- ① Clear and coordinated communications
- ② Shared priorities
- ③ Core infrastructure and capabilities
- ④ Standardized, streamlined processes
- ⑤ Assessing and improving the system
- ⑥ Prioritization of the success of the enterprise over individual VA medical centers



Better results for Veterans through quality research



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VA HAS HAD A ROBUST & RAPID RESEARCH RESPONSE TO COVID-19



Research

- Clinical studies
 - Vaccines
 - Therapeutics
 - Observational
- Predictive modeling & “big data” analyses
- Genomic targets
- Biorepository

Operational

- Enhanced partnerships with VA/VHA, federal partners & Veterans
- New capabilities and procedures for ORD and field
- Best practices & lessons learned



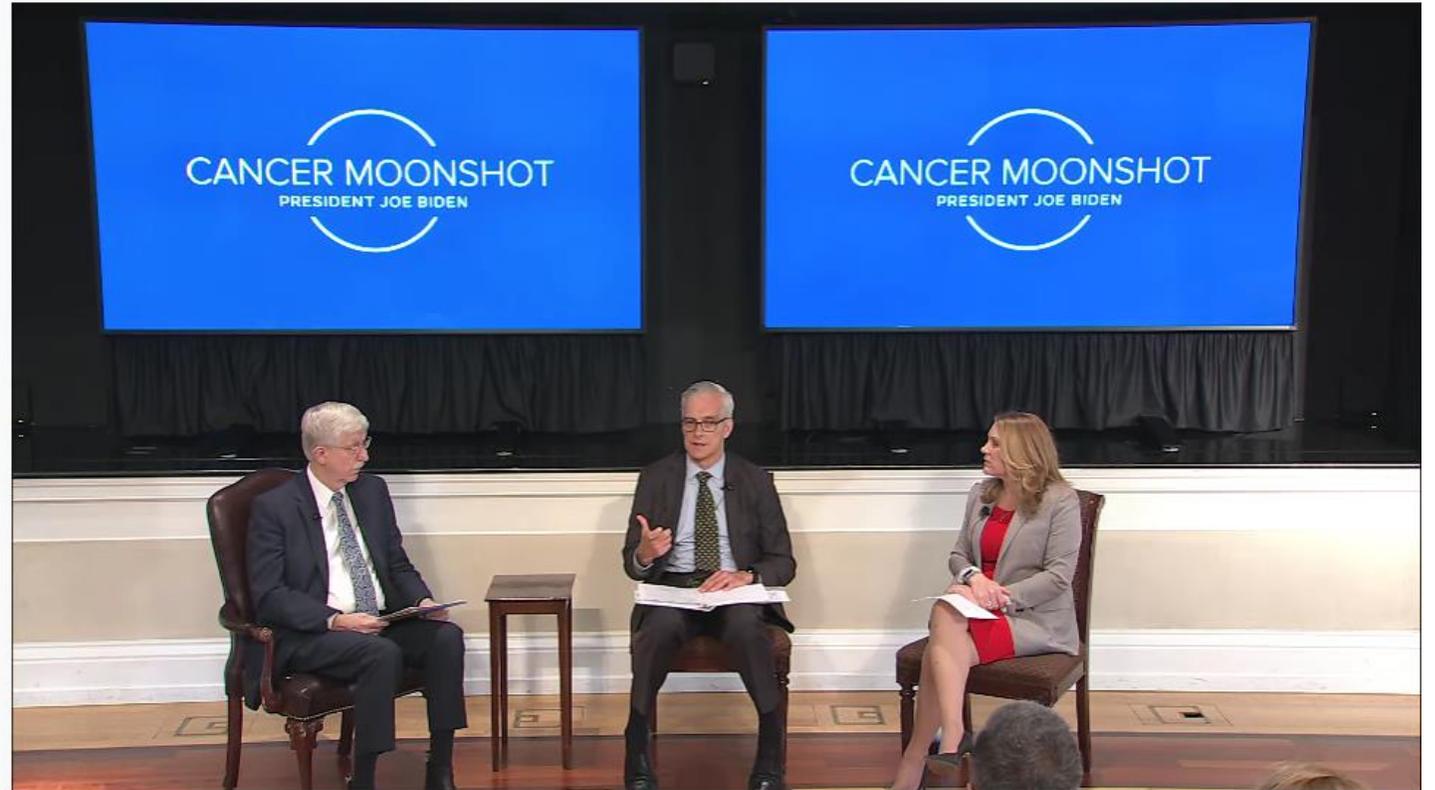
VA’s COVID-19 research response took an enterprise-wide strategy that:

- ✓ Coordinated across offices and research groups
- ✓ Leveraged existing infrastructure and capabilities
- ✓ Accelerated culture & expectations for a post-COVID-19 world

CANCER MOONSHOT 2.0



Search



Cancer Moonshot: Goals Forum

Unlisted

3,059 views Streamed live on May 11, 2022 The White House

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUoCTextY7A>

We are launching 9 FY22 Initiatives as part of the Research Enterprise

Initiative	Objective	Owner
 Actively Managed Portfolios	Provide research leaders with the autonomy and tools to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration with clinical partners to enable a more rapid response to research priorities focused on the unique health challenges faced by Veterans	Kenute Myrie
 Central Research HR Function	Establish a central research HR team to efficiently manage research HR processes, classify positions, hire, and onboard qualified staff for VA Research projects, limiting research start-up and execution delays	Tony Laracuente
 Field Enterprise Research Support Services (FERRS)	Rollout tools to provide VA researchers with expedited access to a wide range of short-term research administration contracting support resources (e.g., biostatisticians, study coordinators, home-visit nurses) needed to get critical research across the finish line	Kenute Myrie
 Finance Process	Maximize the impact of VA research funding by establishing standardized, transparent processes for allocating, obligating, and expending ORD funds	Jason Berlow
 IT and Data Governance	Provide ORD staff and VA researchers with access to the tools, data, processes, and capabilities required to efficiently conduct and support research	Scott DuVall
 ORD Governance and Success Measures	Enable the successful implementation of all initiatives through the development of change management strategies and the coordination of efforts across Research Enterprise governance	Wendy Tenhula
 Organizational Alignment	Ensure alignment of organizational structure and roles with the desired enterprise functions to build capacity and better support researchers, Veterans, and the broader VA Research Enterprise	Molly Klote
 Partnered Research Program (PRP)	Implement streamlined and standardized clinical trial start-up activities for industry-sponsored multisite trials to expand Veterans' access to high-quality clinical trials	Krissa Caroff
 Staff Training Empowerment and Motivation (STEAM)	Implement effective leadership practices by empowering employees to identify unique competencies, skills, talents, and interests and to enhance employee experience through peer education and development of soft and executive skills across ORD	Eva-Marie Austin



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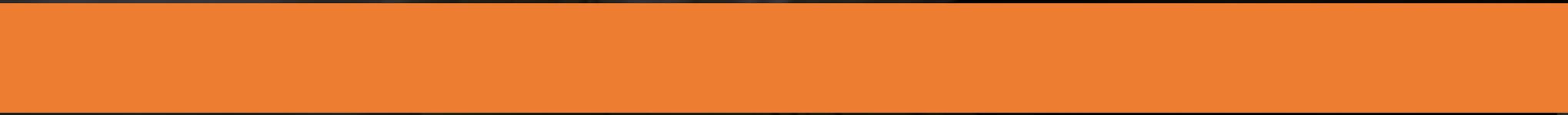
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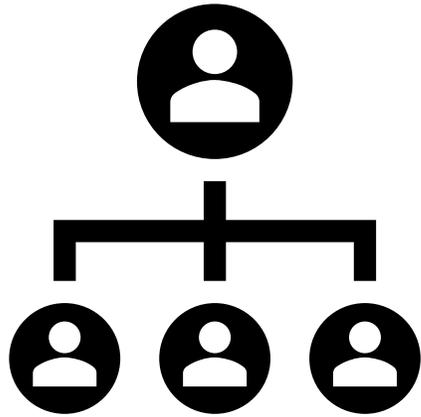
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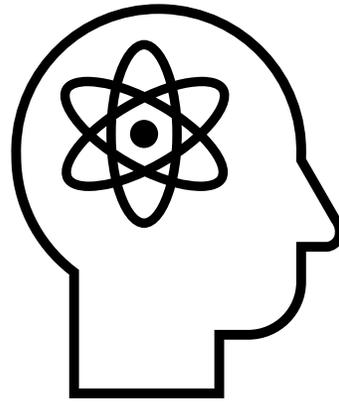
A CLOSER LOOK AT VA
RESEARCH ENTERPRISE
INITIATIVES



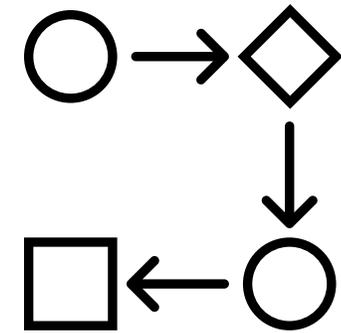
Key Impact Areas for Field



Organizational



Scientific



Operational



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ORD ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT



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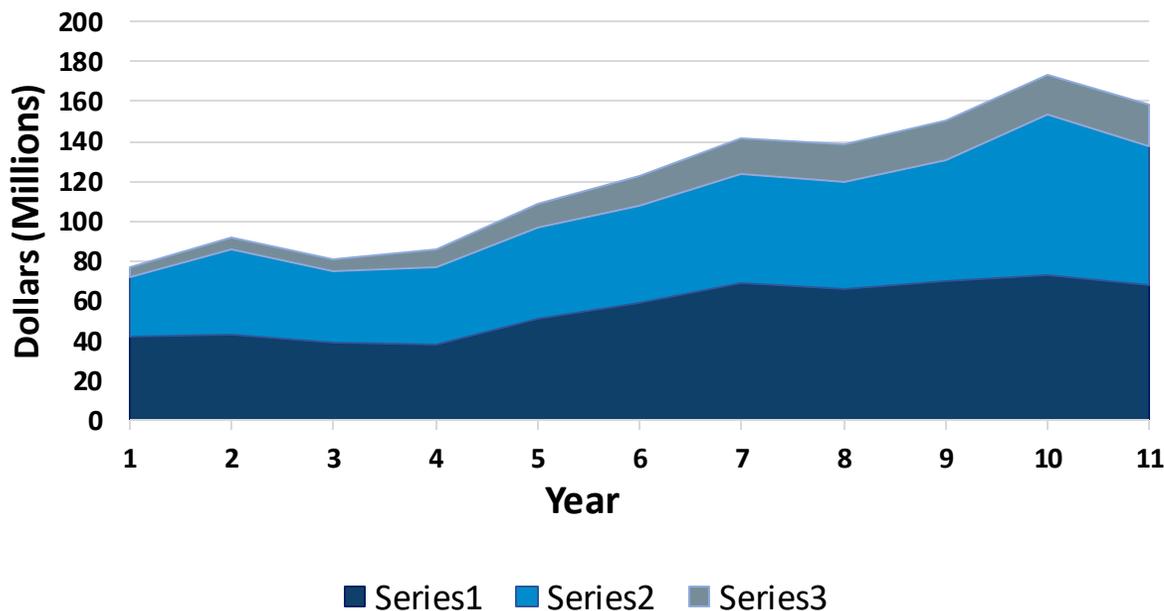
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The Office of Research and Development is updating its organizational structure to reflect its growth and success as a mature research institution

Budgets of Key Portfolios^a



*ORD has seen a **55% budget increase** from 2011 to 2022*

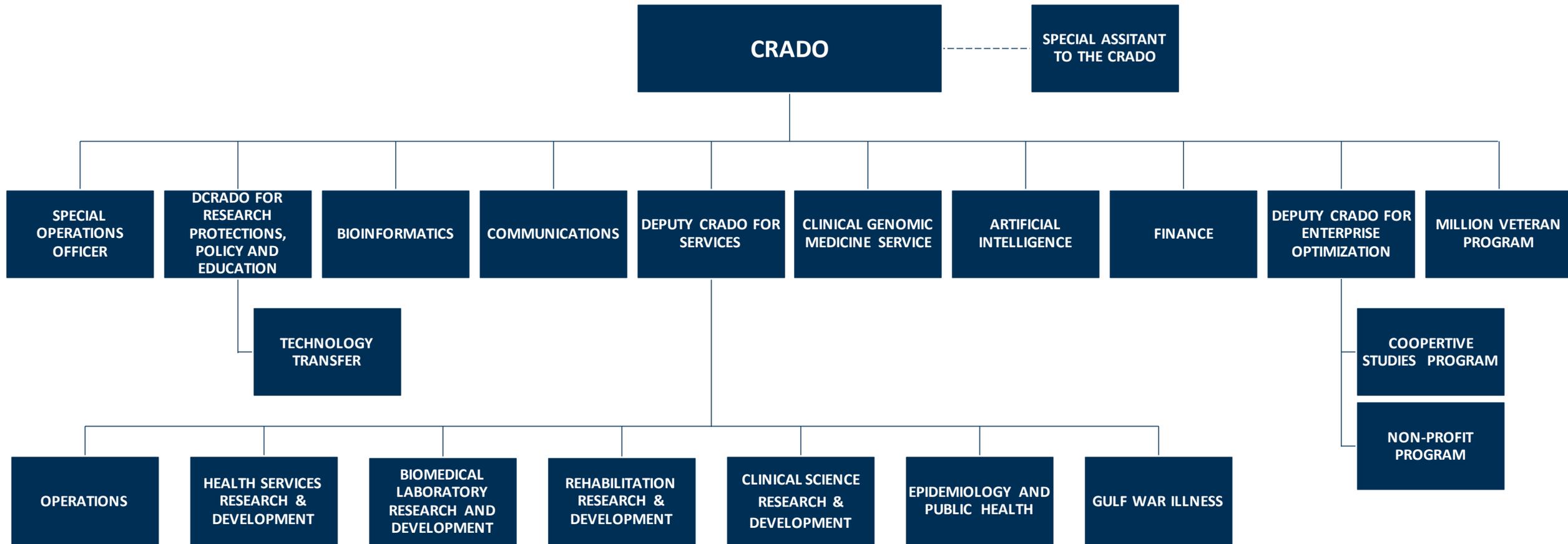
\$581M → **\$882M**
 In 2011^b In 2022^c

*ORD has not meaningfully changed its organizational structure since **2001***

How can we harness this growth to better deliver on our mission?

a) RAFT Analysis b) FY 2011 Funding and FY 2012 Advance Appropriations Request c) Department of Veterans Affairs FY2022 Appropriations

ORD's current organization for soliciting, reviewing, and funding research is siloed



Each of the services has evolved its own policies, procedures, application requirements, and ways of managing its funds.

On April 26th, 2022 ORD released a memo outlining how the Organizational Alignment will enable VA Research to operate more efficiently and effectively



Aligning ORD activities and functions to better serve the Field as funders of research



Serving as the strategic headquarters of a Veteran-focused biomedical research organization



Empowering local VA facilities to use centrally developed/managed tools and contracts

Through these efforts, ORD will fulfill its mission to become a more integral part of how VA sees and uses research in serving Veterans by producing high quality evidence, innovative scientific capabilities, and impactful findings in support of their care.

ORD's future foundational structure of will align our organization with its enterprise functions

L1

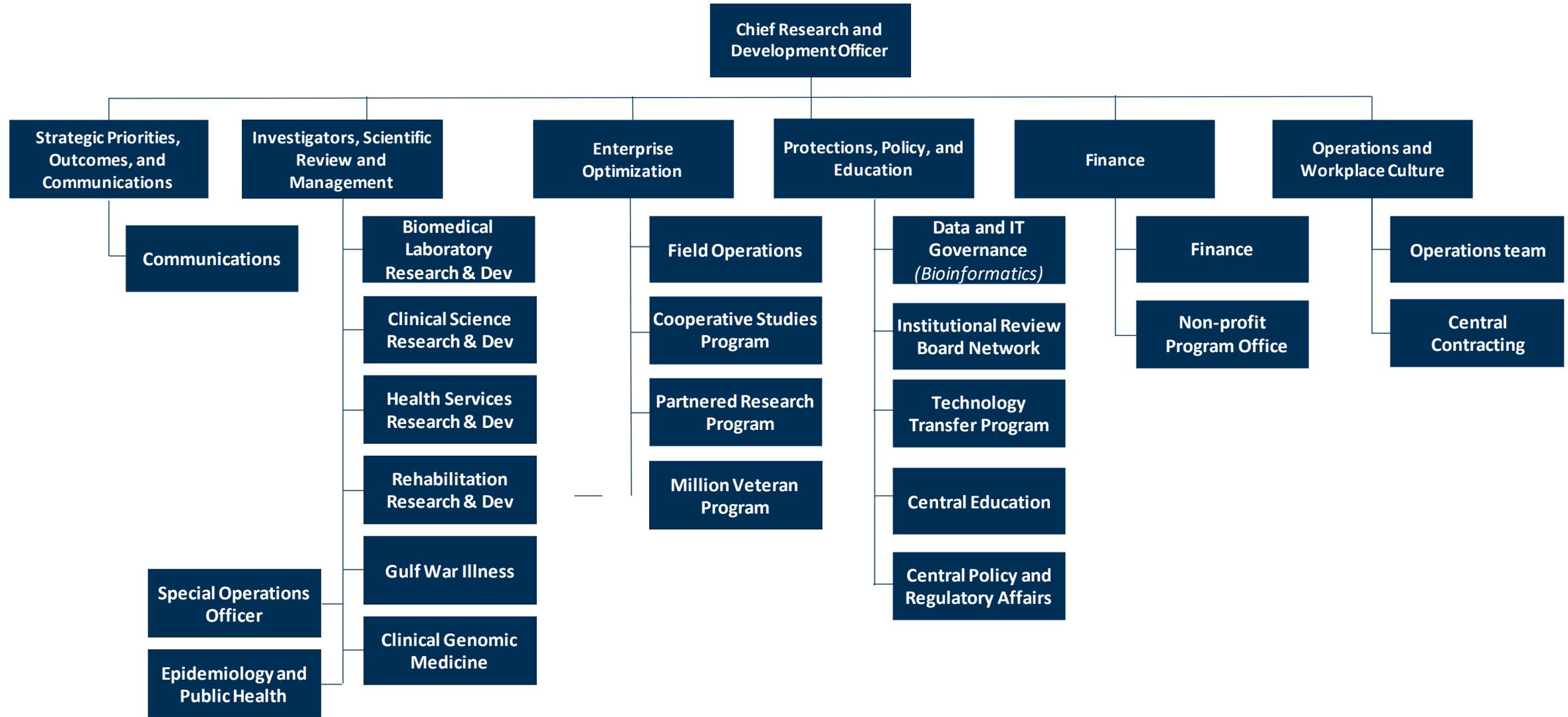


L2



*Note that titles of the work units in this layer may be updated.

ORD's organization beginning Oct 1, 2022



Slow is smooth, smooth is fast



The alignment will occur in phases over the next 2 years; the final organizational form will reflect both experience and input.



Each phase will consist of data gathering, design/planning, implementation, and evaluation.



Over time, the structure for priority setting, solicitations, funding, funding decisions will shift to more actively managed portfolios.

Beyond the PO AMP, the Services will otherwise operate as usual through at least FY23.

There will be no termination whatsoever of currently committed funding or funding that is committed to through process as a result of the transition.

Most of ORD's funding will remain investigator-initiated.



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ORD RE-ALIGNMENT – IMPACT & ACTIONS

- ORD scientific and operational groups will be more aligned to allow better understanding and efficiency across the enterprise
 - Better coordination/communications across groups doing similar work
 - Better ability to support and provide guidance to the field
 - ORD resources can be better used to help address higher priority needs
 - E.g., Dedicated Field Operations unit to help streamline communications and operational support

ACOS – R roles

- Help inform investigators and local leadership
 - NOTE: No immediate changes that will disrupt current activities.
- Suggest areas for improvements through available channels and get engaged with opportunities to create changes (E.g., NRAC, Enterprise transformation SharePoint)
- Work together to identify key challenges / needs

Ongoing information about the Organizational Realignment will be communicated with the Field through senior staff and several other venues



VA Intranet - Feedback Form
(Anonymous):

<https://bit.ly/ResearchEnterpriseFeedback>



Feedback Email (Direct Response):
VHAORDResearchEntFb@va.gov



VA Intranet - Learn more at our
SharePoint at

<https://bit.ly/RESharePoint>

Field Engagement Opportunities

- **Office Hours:** Meet ORD leaders during office hours to share any questions or concerns about the organizational realignment.
- **Field Webinars:** Stay tuned for information about the second in this series of Field webinars.
- **Organizational Alignment FAQ:** Find answers to questions on the SharePoint.

SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE



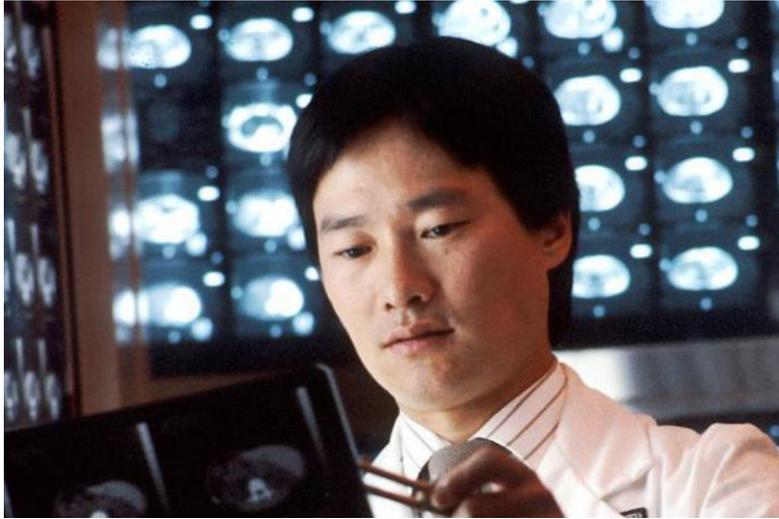
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To better enable ORD's goal of collaborative, goal-directed, research that improves Veteran lives, we will replace the current Service-based structure.



No funding will be cut midstream due to the Organizational Alignment

Strong Research-Clinical collaboration is essential for achieving real-world impact in Veteran healthcare



What is the purpose of the Actively Managed Portfolio initiative?



What are Actively Managed Portfolios?

*Portfolios of related research, operating as a part of a larger learning health system, that prioritize **communication, coordination, and collaboration** between clinicians, researchers, and other stakeholders to solve specific questions regarding real-world health challenges faced by Veterans*



Ensure the strategic investment of taxpayer dollars



Promote strategic coordination of research across ORD



Increase collaboration between research, clinical operations, and external partners



Maximize efficiency by supporting research end-to-end

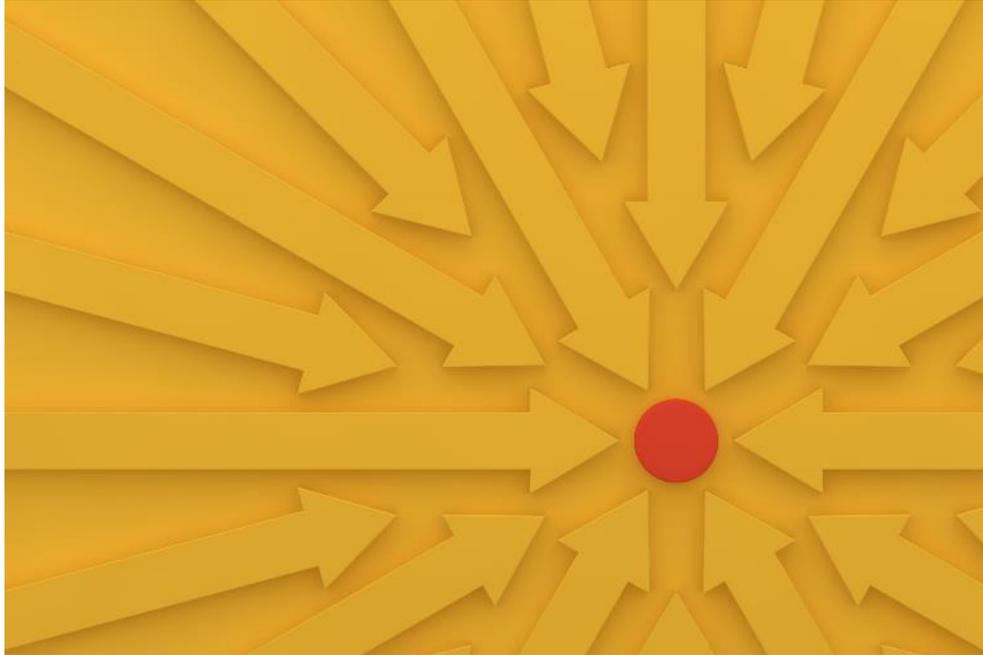


Establish criteria for rapid review and funding of prioritized research studies



Enhance utilization of data and analytical tools

What are the goals of the Actively Managed Portfolios Initiative?



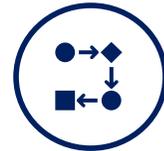
Actively Managed Portfolio Initiative Objectives



Develop a framework for Actively Managed Portfolios that incorporates a learning healthcare system approach to research management



Establish key performance indicators for AMPs to track the efficacy of research projects and measure the performance of an AMP against its critical goals

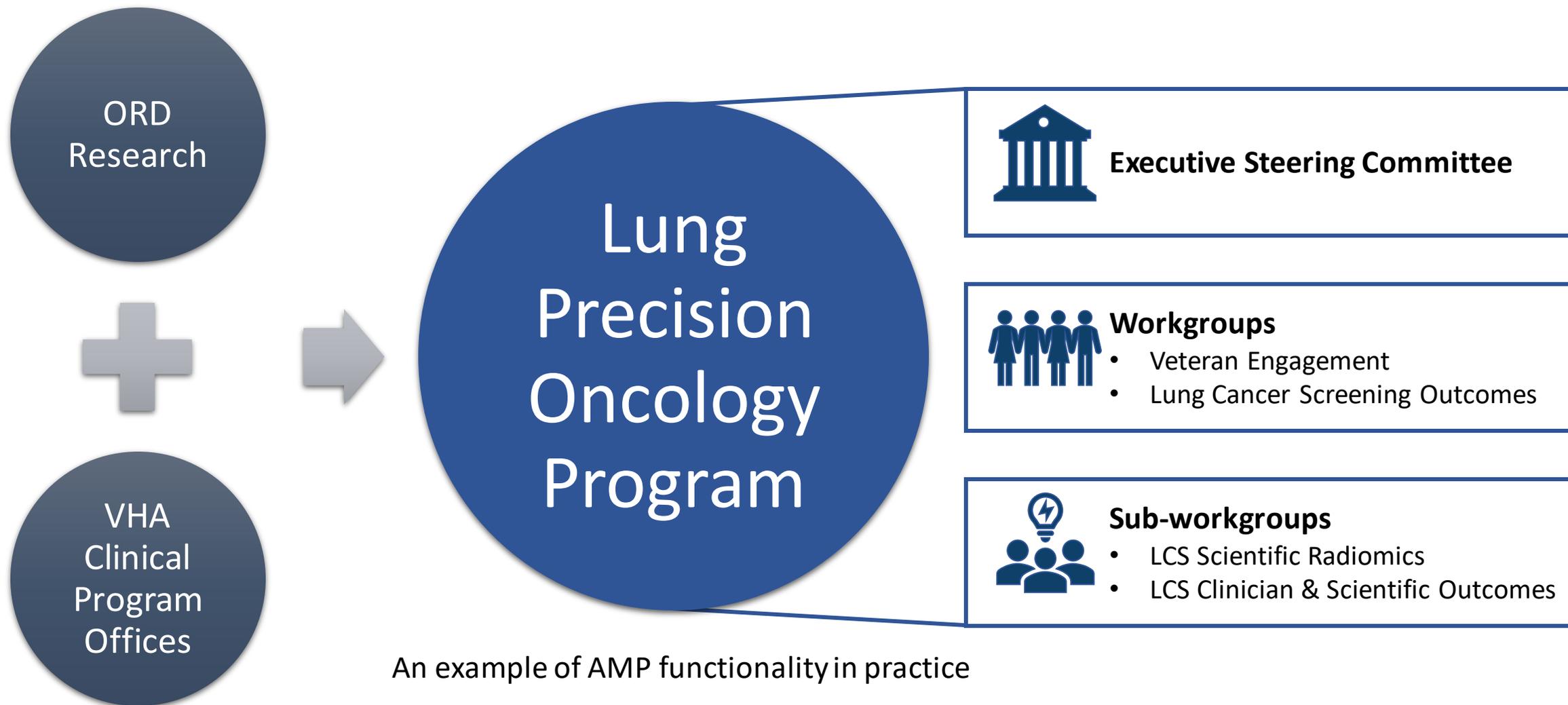


Establish standard operating procedures necessary for the Accelerated review of priority research projects that rapidly address urgent health challenges for Veterans



Craft comprehensive dashboards and reporting tools to facilitate strategic portfolio management and ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of AMP-specific research

The beginnings of the Actively Managed Portfolios framework can be seen in the development of the Lung Precision Oncology Program (LPOP)



An example of AMP functionality in practice

Actively Managed Portfolios Requirements



Strategically identify and fund research that seeks to **answer specific, real-world questions** that are important to Veterans, providers, and/or the healthcare system that results in the improvement of health, care and well-being of Veterans



Ensure that scientific research discoveries within the portfolio **translate into clinical practice** and inform healthcare decision making



Develop and implement quality improvement interventions that enhance clinical and research outcomes and support the achievement of the portfolio's goals



Promote the continued maturation of VHA as a learning healthcare system through repeatable processes focused on **communication, coordination and collaboration** with key stakeholders

Requirements: The requisite responsibilities for all Actively Managed Portfolios

Five Key AMP Capabilities

Capabilities: Targeted, prioritized list of mission-critical capabilities necessary to achieve AMPs' goals



Enable strategic coordination of research projects within the portfolio



Foster greater collaboration between ORD research and VHA clinical partners as well as external collaborators



Enhance utilization of existing data and analytical tools to increase coordination and collaboration of research



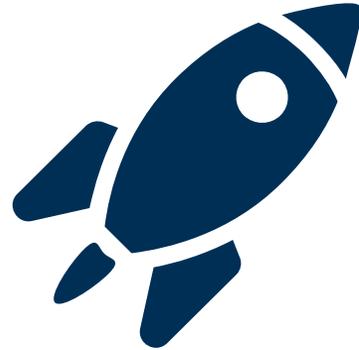
Set research roadmap and strategic priorities



Rapidly review and fund prioritized research studies



Precision Oncology October 1st Launch – Work in Progress



Precision Oncology will become the first prototype AMP on October 1st, 2022



Accelerated Review Policies



Strategic Research Roadmap

SCIENTIFIC/ AMP INITIATIVES – IMPACT & ACTIONS

- No immediate changes for merit review or other funding mechanisms will occur
- Initially, oncology investigators will have more opportunities to connect and collaborate on scientific efforts, especially in precision oncology as the first prototype to be tested as an AMP.
 - Opportunities to join workgroups in the LPOP, POPCaP/GU networks and others are planned for heme, brain, colorectal, breast and gynecological cancers to identify areas of need for healthcare system
- Investigators should seek avenues for connecting with clinical partners on identifying areas of need for healthcare system.

ACOS – R roles

- Observe / learn about what's happening in Precision Oncology (e.g., LPOP)
- Facilitate connections among scientific and clinical personnel and leadership at VAMC
- Identify opportunities for more team science approaches to innovative investigations
- Provide input into scientific and operational considerations for future transition

FIELD RESEARCH OPERATIONS



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Get to know Tony and Carl



ORD FIELD OPERATIONS ROADMAP (DRAFT)

Activities will be organized around categories that are central to the success of the VA research enterprise, done in partnership with R&D offices emphasizing:

-  • People – to further enhance training to build the ACOS-R and AO workforce
-  • Processes & Policies – to outline expectations and enable more effective management
-  • Tools & Resources – to enable more efficient conduct of activities
-  • Communications – to better connect all pieces of the field/ORD enterprise
-  • Enterprise Development – to strategically position VA research offices and staff to meet ongoing and emerging priorities

Field Research Operations – Planned / In Progress Actions

- Refer to Tony Laracuenta's presentation
 - FERRS
 - HR Centralization
 - Centralized PDs
 - CC 101
 - PACER
- Training / professional development
 - Webinars on finance, regulatory, operational/policy-related topics
 - See Melissa Middleton & Carrie May's presentation
- Labor mapping – protected time

FIELD RESEARCH OPERATIONS – IMPACTS & ACTIONS

- ORD is putting an emphasis on helping R&D Offices achieve highest standards by reducing burden, increasing efficiencies & building community among leaders
- Providing tools and training are more immediate pathway priorities

ACOS-R Roles

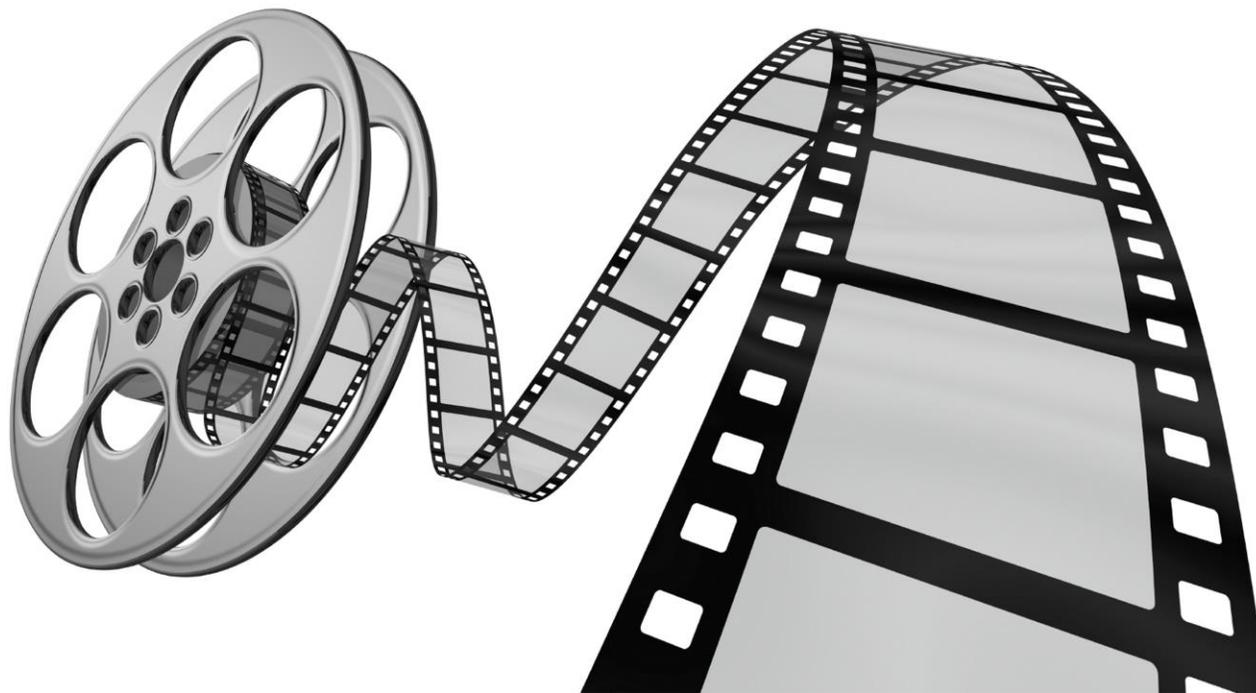
- Take up ownership opportunities – participate in upcoming workgroups, input sessions, and take advantage of offerings
- Identify local standards / goals that ORD can help you achieve
- Work together – grass-roots solutions are powerful in VA
- Look at ORD as a partner

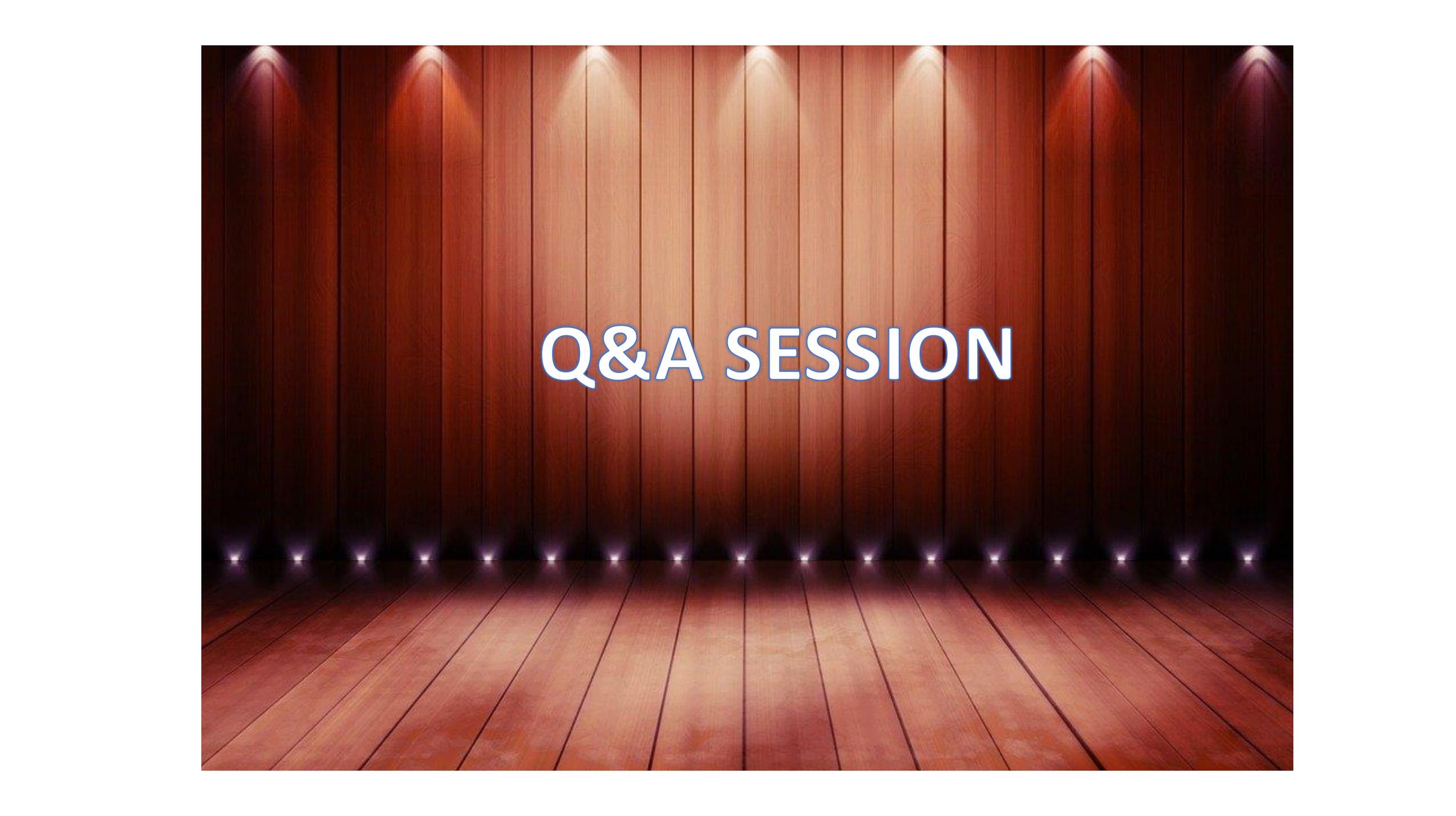


**As an enterprise,
VA Research can
be tremendously
powerful for
improving
Veteran and
national health.**



THANK YOU



A stage with a wood-paneled wall and floor, illuminated by spotlights. The text "Q&A SESSION" is centered on the wall.

Q&A SESSION